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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: U.N. BRIEFS ON ITURI SITUATION

11. (U) SUMMARY: U.N. officials briefed Kinshasa-based diplomats and humanitarian workers on March 8 about the current situation in Ituri. They stressed the need for the GDRC to adopt a clear position towards Ituri militias and to address the dire humanitarian situation they have caused. End Summary.

#### Militia at Loga Were Well-Organized

12. (SBU) MONUC military chief of staff Gen. Jean-Francois Collot d'Escury briefed Kinshasa-based diplomats and humanitarian workers on March 8 about MONUC's recent operation in Ituri against the Front for National Integration (FNI) militia group. The March 1 clash with the FNI at Loga--pitting 242 Pakistanis, Nepalese and South Africans against over 450 militiamen--began when the latter opened fire on the MONUC force. Gen. Collot d'Escury noted that the FNI force was well-armed and employed sound tactics. The MONUC force therefore approached deliberately and slowly to give civilians time to flee the village. Subsequent missions by MONUC and MSF have not found evidence of civilian casualties from the Loga operation, he added.

#### GDRC Policy Towards Ituri Unclear

13. (SBU) Dominique McAdams, the MONUC/Bunia's civilian head of office, emphasized that the GDRC needed to clarify its stance towards the armed groups in Ituri. She said that although some Ituri militia leaders were under "house arrest" in Kinshasa, the GDRC had yet to officially charge or detain any of them for their role in destabilizing Ituri. She also said the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) militia had failed to send to Kinshasa any of the UPC officers integrated into the national army on January 10, yet the GDRC had not taken any action against them. Finally, McAdams noted that over 100 villages had been burned and over 50,000 people had been displaced by militias in Ituri over the past 10 weeks, yet the GDRC has remained silent on the humanitarian crisis.

#### MONUC Alleges Ugandan Support to Militias

14. (SBU) Gen. Collot d'Escury said the level of sophistication shown by FNI militias during the Loga operation and the type of arms seized from them pointed to external support, most likely from Uganda. McAdams also alleged that officers from various militias, including UPC and Popular Armed Forces of the Congo (FAPC) travel frequently to Kampala without any impediments. She noted that earlier in the year a group of militia had evacuated the village of Joo on the shores of Lake Albert and taken a boat towards Uganda with all their arms. (Note: In November 2004 poloff crossed the DRC-Ugandan border twice from the town of Aru, Ituri in the company of FAPC militias without anyone having been stopped by Ugandan authorities to present documents. End Note.)

#### Militia Attacks Have Caused Humanitarian Crisis

15. (SBU) Jahal De Meritens, head of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the DRC, called attention to the dire humanitarian situation caused by militias in Ituri. He said humanitarian agencies had a limited capacity to provide assistance in Ituri, especially in areas of continued militia activity such as Tche and Kafe, and called for a coordinated, multi-sector, simultaneous strategy of assistance. De Meritens said that as of March 8, the internally displaced population (IDP) in Ituri was as follows:

- Tche: 21,350
- Kakwa/Kafe: 17,760
- Kasenyi/Tchomia: 15,700
- Gina: 13,495
- Bunia Airport: 10,015
- Lopa: 7,000
- Muhito: 5,305

#### Congolese Commander Negotiates Militia Disarmament

16. (SBU) The commander of the 9th Military Region, General Padiri Bulende, told poloff March 9 he had obtained an agreement from the Popular Armed Forces of the Congo (FAPC) militia in Aru, Ituri, to demobilize 2000 of its fighters.

The national commission for disarmament and demobilization (CONADER) would usher this group through the disarmament program in Ituri. Many of these individuals will eventually join the national army.

17. (U) Bujumbura minimized considered.  
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